



File Code: 1950
Date: June 7, 2017

Greetings,

The Three Rivers Ranger District, Colville National Forest is proposing to prepare an environmental analysis to determine whether effects of proposed activities may be significant enough to prepare an environmental impact statement. This letter describes the initial plan to analyze and evaluate access into the South Fork Boulder Creek drainage. The project area lies within Ferry County, Washington, west of the Columbia River, and south of the town of Orient.

In 1998, flooding washed out portions of Forest Service Road (FSR) 6110 (also known as the South Fork Boulder road) making it impassable, and the Forest Service closed the road for public and employee safety. Before the 1998 floods, this road system provided public access for dispersed camping, creek fishing, gathering forest products, pleasure driving, viewing scenery, snowmobile use, and access to both the lower Taylor Ridge trail (#74), and the Thompson Ridge Jeep Trail (#107). The road also provided needed access for administrative uses like livestock and grazing allotment administration, key ingress and egress for wildfire and other emergency response, vegetation management and timber contracting, and other key monitoring and project level activities.

Please see enclosed maps for more specific project location information.

Forest Plan Direction

The primary Forest Plan management area for the project area is 3A - Recreation. The goal is to provide roaded and unroaded recreation opportunities in a natural appearing setting. This issue is obviously related to access, but also includes factors such as solitude and quality of the recreation experience.

Purpose and Need

The need for action for the South Fork Boulder Road project is to create adequate access into this area of the forest, while minimizing the effects to aquatic resources like water quality and fish habitat. Adequate access must include both public and administrative needs, and should be responsive to desires for recreational opportunities. For administrative access, the project should respond to the need for appropriate management of the grazing allotments, access for fire suppression, and incorporate potential future needs for a transportation system that can adequately address vegetation management and other restoration activities. All alternatives must address eroding of any cut/fill slopes, protect and improve aquatic habitat, and slow the spread of noxious weeds.



Proposed Action

Alternative B

This alternative proposes to reconstruct the existing South Fork Boulder road, and includes 0.3 miles of new road construction, 2 bridge replacements, 3.9 miles of road reconstruction, and 0.2 miles of road decommissioning.

The proposed action would construct this route to a maintenance level 3 standard (suitable for passenger vehicles). The bridge at Milepost 0.15, over North Fork Boulder Creek, would be replaced, and six locations of road embankment failure would require installation of road stabilization features. These stabilization features could include retaining walls or rock walls and scour protection from South Fork Boulder Creek. There are two locations, both near the junction with FSR 6110100, where debris slides have crossed the road. The South Fork Boulder road would be reconstructed at both locations to minimize future infrastructure loss and sediment delivery in the case of another landslide event. The bridge over South Fork Boulder Creek on FSR 6110100 would be removed and replaced south of the existing bridge site with a short segment of new road construction.

Under this alternative, the South Fork Boulder road would remain a designated groomed snowmobile trail with a parking area located at the junction with County Road 602 (Boulder-Deer Highway).

Other Alternatives

Alternative A

This alternative proposes to decommission and stabilize the existing South Fork Boulder road beginning at the junction with the Boulder-Deer highway, and reconstruct the travel way converting the existing road into a trail. This trail would be constructed for use by both motorized (less than 50" widths) and non-motorized users. The trail would begin at the Boulder-Deer highway and end at the junction with the South Fork Boulder road and FSR 6110178. Access by full size vehicles to the project area would remain as is it is now, which means that vehicle travel would need to use FSR 6113000 (Bulldog Cabin road) to the South Fork Boulder road. The South Fork Boulder road would terminate at the junction with FSR 6110178, where it will be converted to the trail described above.

Alternative C (Option East)

This alternative proposes to construct the primary South Fork Boulder access beginning at County Road 593 (Hodgson-Lakin Road) and the junction with County Road 594 (Hodgson Spur Road). The Hodgson Spur road connects the Hodgson-Lakin road to FSR 9500873. Option east includes 1.2 miles of new road construction, 2 bridge replacements, 2.8 miles of road reconstruction, and 4.8 miles of road decommissioning.

This alternative would reconstruct FSR 9500873 to a maintenance level 3 standard, and add sections of new construction to reduce road grades. New road switchbacks would connect FSR 9500873 to Road 6110130, which would be reconstructed to its junction with FSR 6110100. FSR 6110100 would require new road construction to connect with South Fork Boulder road. The intersection between FSR 6110100 and the South Fork Boulder road would require the

removal and relocation of the existing bridge that crosses South Fork Boulder Creek. This bridge replacement is similar to that described in the preferred alternative.

Option east would decommission the South Fork Boulder road from its junction with the Boulder-Deer highway to the new junction with FSR 6110100. FSRs 6110019 and 6110020 would be decommissioned for their full lengths. The newly completed route described in this alternative would be designated as a groomed snowmobile trail with a parking area located near Milepost 0.3 of FSR 9500873.

Alternative D (Option West)

This alternative proposes to construct the primary South Fork Boulder access west of the current road with a junction on the Boulder-Deer Highway. Option west includes 0.9 miles of new road construction, 1 bridge replacement, 2.8 miles of road reconstruction, and 2.4 miles of road decommissioning.

This alternative would construct this route to a maintenance level 3 standard. Beginning at a point on the Boulder-Deer highway, new road construction would climb up to FSR 6110020. The new construction crosses some sections of steep hillslopes and a drainage that may require retaining walls and a culvert large enough to pass debris. FSR 6110020 would be reconstructed for its full length including reconstruction of a double switchback and the junction with the South Fork Boulder road. The South Fork Boulder road would be reconstructed south of this junction, and to minimize future infrastructure loss and sediment delivery, this reconstruction will include two locations where debris slides have crossed the road. The bridge over South Fork Boulder Creek on FSR 6110100 would be removed and replaced south of the existing bridge with a short segment of new road construction as described in the preferred alternative.

Road decommissioning would include all of South Fork Boulder road between the Boulder-Deer highway and FSR 6110020 and a short section of FSR 6110100. Option west would become designated as a groomed snowmobile trail with a parking area located on the terrace adjacent to FSR 6110020, 0.3 miles from the intersection with the Boulder-Deer highway.

Invitation to Comment on this Proposal

We are informing you about this proposal so that you can provide input to us. Your comments will be considered and used to identify issues associated with the proposal, and potentially generate other alternatives, so please be as specific as possible. We will have a formal comment period when the draft environmental analysis document is ready for review, and there will be an opportunity to comment further at that time.

Both written and verbal comments are welcome. To be most useful, comments should be received no later than 30 days from the date of this letter. Comments can be mailed or hand delivered to: Joshua White, Three Rivers Ranger District, 255 West 11th, Kettle Falls, WA, 99141. The office hours for those wishing to make hand delivered comments are 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

We will also accept correspondence at the following email address: comments-pacificnorthwest-colville-threerivers@fs.fed.us. Please put "South Fork Boulder Road Scoping Comments" in the

subject line of your email. If you have any questions, additional information can be provided by calling Lisa Green at 509-684-7211.

All comments received, as well as the names, addresses, and other contact information of those who commented, are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and would be considered part of the public record.

Thank you for your participation in this project.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is an equal opportunity provider and employer

Sincerely,



JOSHUA P. WHITE
District Ranger